

## 16. PURPLERUMPED SUNBIRD *NECTARINIA ZEYLONICA* (LINN.): A NEW RECORD FOR ASSAM

The purplerumped sunbird *Nectarinia zeylonica* was hitherto unrecorded in Assam. At about 1415 hrs on 19 April 1988, I saw one male of this species in the garden of the local sub-divisional veterinary office compound, located in the heart of Hailakandi town in southern Cachar district.

According to the HANDBOOK OF THE BIRDS OF INDIA AND PAKISTAN (Ali, S. and Ripley, S.D. 1983) the nearest

area where the purplerumped sunbird is found is southern Bangladesh (up to Dhaka in the north) and extending to Arakan. The species seems to have been overlooked on many occasions. It is apparently an uncommon resident of the Barak valley districts of Cachar and Karimganj.

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## 17. HYBRID HOUSE SPARROW-TREE SPARROW FROM ARUNACHAL PRADESH

On 3 January 1981, the senior author collected three *Passer* specimens at Deban, 22 km east of Miao, Tirap district, Arunachal Pradesh (altitude 330 m). These three specimens were tentatively identified as tree sparrows *Passer montanus hepaticus*, and deposited in the collection of the National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. Later, while carrying out a complete review of our collections of birds from Arunachal Pradesh, we found that one of the *Passer* specimens (USNM No. 585161) appears to be a hybrid *montanus* x *domesticus*. This is of interest for two reasons. It apparently is the first evidence of hybridization between the house sparrow and the tree sparrow in India (Baker 1926, Ali and Ripley 1987), and it may represent the first specimen record proving the occurrence of *domesticus* in the hills of Arunachal Pradesh (see Ripley 1982: 537).

The putative hybrid is a male (testes not enlarged) in adult, non-breeding plumage, with measurements (in mm) as follows: wing chord 72; wing arc 74; bill from skull 14; bill from feathering 11; tail 52; tarsus 18; weight 18 g. Most of these measurements would accord well with the range of measurements of either species, but the weight agrees more closely to *montanus*, as does the short tarsus.

This specimen shows five characters that agree with *montanus*, one character that agrees with *domesticus* and three characters that are intermediate between the two presumed parental types.

The single, but very prominent, pure *domesticus* character is the buff-grey cap and nape, indistinguishable from typical *Passer domesticus indicus* the population recorded from north-eastern India.

Plumage characters intermediate between *montanus* and *domesticus* are: (1) brown lores contrasting with the grey cap (entire cap grey in *domesticus*, entire cap brown in *montanus*); (2) check spot is an apparent, but obsolete, dark grey smudge (entirely absent in *domesticus*; and a well-delineated black spot in *montanus*); and (3) chestnut streaking on mantle is apparent (much more dominant in *domesticus*, absent in *montanus*.)

Plumage characters that agree with pure *montanus* are: (1) the twin buff-white wing-bars (lacking the prominent anterior white wing-bar of *domesticus*); (2) chin stripe and bib are narrow, short, and not much expanded posteriorly (much more prominent in *domesticus*); (3) abdomen dirty buff (not clear pale buff as in *domesticus*); (4) rump buff-brown (not pale buff-grey as in *domesticus*).

Outside of the Indian region, the two species have been reported to hybridize in a few localities (Albrecht 1983, Hume 1983, Goselj 1985); and yet *P. domesticus* is much better known to interbreed with the Spanish sparrow *P. hispaniolensis*, with which it also co-occurs over a considerable range (Vaurie 1959).

Although the geographic ranges of house and tree sparrows generally meet all along the Himalayan cordillera, only in a few sites do the two exhibit true within-site sympatry. The two sort out by habitat, the tree sparrow generally occurring at higher altitudes, and in less urban locales. Krishna Raju and Price (1973) found both house and tree sparrows inhabiting villages in the Chintapalle plateau of the Eastern Ghats. Price (1979) reported an unconfirmed observation of a hybrid at the village of Busalkort. We should note that our search for the populations of *montanus* on this same plateau in 1985 failed (Ripley *et al.* 1988). Has the house sparrow completely replaced the relict population of the tree sparrow in the Eastern Ghats?

Deban, Arunachal Pradesh, where our hybrid specimen was taken, lies at the foot of the Dapha Bum range, at an altitude that may be low for *montanus* and at the upper edge of the altitudinal range of *domesticus*. We presume that hybrids between these two species will be found by future ornithologists who focus on the non-forest avifauna of the hills of north-eastern India.

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